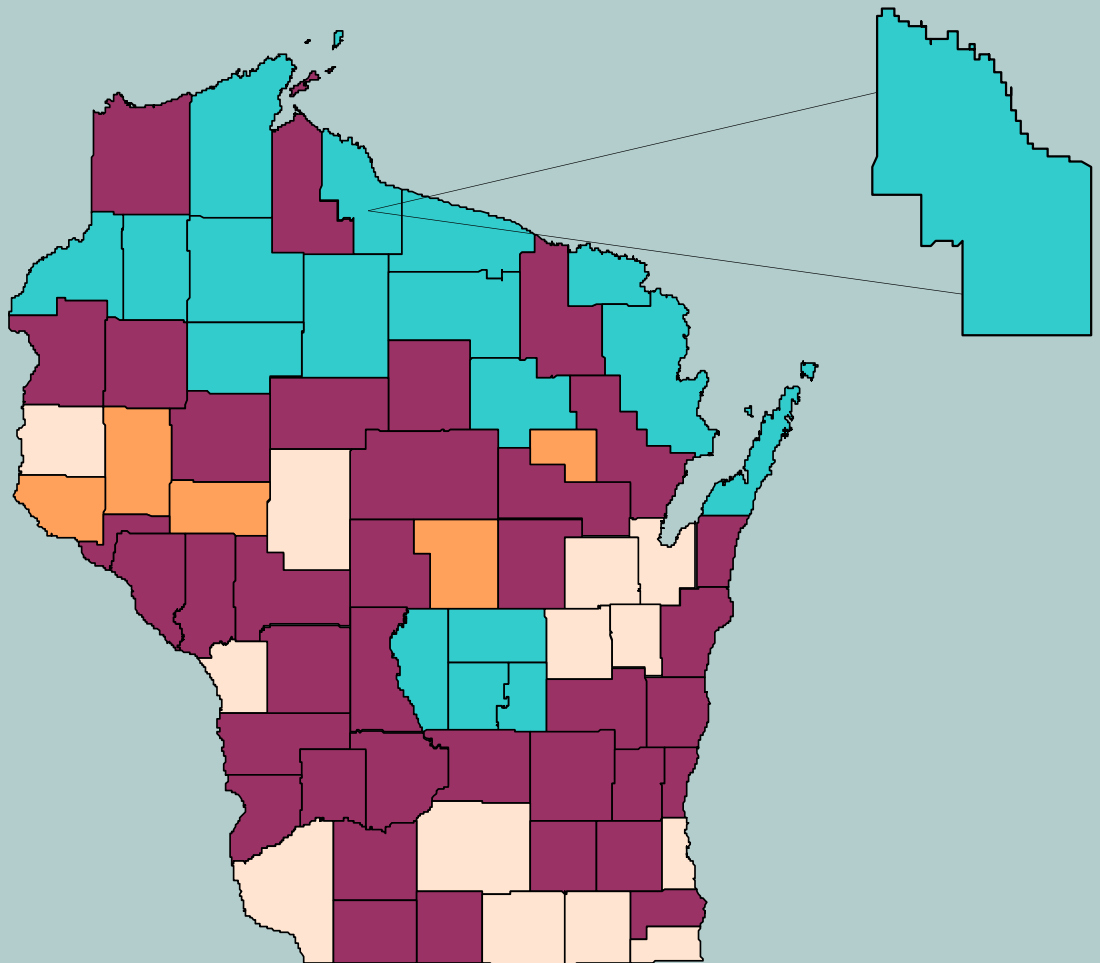


# Iron County

## Workforce Profile

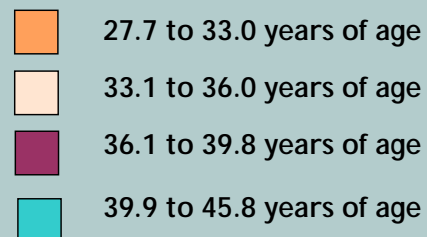
Median Age by County, 2000



Your complete guide to the state of the labor force of today and a glimpse into the economy of tomorrow.



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Workforce Development  
October 2002



Source: Census 2000 of the United States



## County Population

The population in Iron County increased from 6,153 in 1990 to 6,861 in April 2000 according to Census 2000 information. That increase of 708 reversed all of the loss in population experienced during the 1980s. In 1980 the county population was 6,730. Since the census there have been no changes in county population and no increase is less than the changes in both the state and nation.

The change in population during the last decade was entirely from a net increase in migration of 1,072 that reversed the loss in population from migration during the 1970s and 1980s. The migration rate of 17.4 percent, 9<sup>th</sup> highest in the state, exceeded the state migration rate of 4.7 percent. During the decade, there were also 566 births in the county but that was less than the 930 deaths.

A net gain in population from migration means that more people moved to the county than moved out of the county. Census 2000 reveals that prior to 1995, roughly 21 percent of the population 5 years and older, or 1,393 individuals, lived in a different county. Of those new residents 49 percent moved from another state and 51 percent from somewhere else in Wisconsin.

The census also reveals that the majority of the increase in county population occurred with the ad-

dition of 611 in the white population. Other ethnic groups did contribute to population growth but the increases were small. In 2000, just over 99 percent of the population in Iron County were white, about the same as in 1990. The American Indian population increased from 11 to 41 during the decade but are still less than one percent of the total population.

The Town of Mercer had the largest increase in population with the addition of 407 residents, while the Town of Oma had the second largest increase of 95 residents and the greatest change of 36.5 percent. The largest municipality, the City of Hurley, gained 36 residents from 1990 to 2000, but declined by 3 by the end of 2000.

Many of the residents that moved to the county during the 1990s were older but not so old that they were ready to retire. The greatest increase in the population occurred in the 40-49 year old age group, followed by the second largest increase in the 50-59 year old age group. Some of the increase was from an aging population, but not all of it.

Increases in the age groups on the upper end of the spectrum had an impact on the median age in Iron County that increased to 45 years in 2000 from

(Continued on page 2)

### Total Population

	2000 Census	January 1, 2001 Estimate	Percent change
United States	281,421,906	283,474,000	0.7%
Wisconsin	5,363,675	5,400,449	0.7%
Iron County	6,861	6,861	0.0%

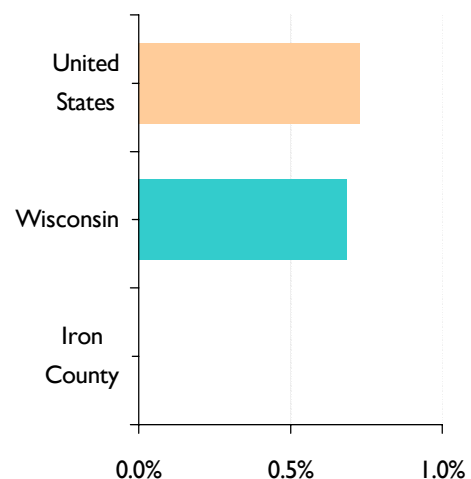
### Ten Largest Municipalities

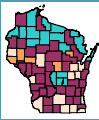
Hurley, City	1,818	1,815	-0.2%
Mercer, Town	1,732	1,730	-0.1%
Montreal, City	838	836	-0.2%
Kimball, Town	540	538	-0.4%
Oma, Town	355	361	1.7%
Saxon, Town	350	349	-0.3%
Sherman, Town	336	338	0.6%
Knight, Town	284	283	-0.4%
Pence, Town	198	197	-0.5%
Carey, Town	191	193	1.0%

\* Iron portion only

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services, 2002

### Population Growth 2000-2001



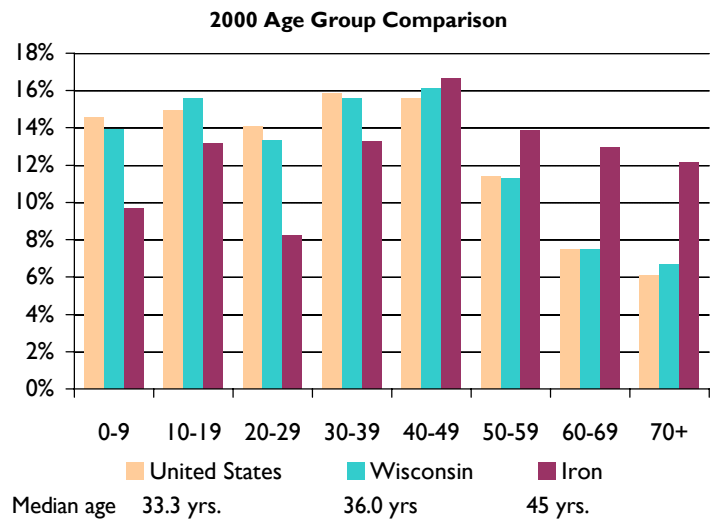


42.1 years in 1990. The median age in the county, higher than both the state median age of 36.0 years and the national median of 33.3 years, is the second highest median age in the state. The Town of Sherman with a median age of 59.2 is the second oldest municipality in the state.

The higher median age means that there are more residents in the older population groups than in the younger age groups and that is apparent in the graph on the right. The county has a smaller share of population in all of the age groups under 40 than both the state and nation.

Beginning at age 40, the county share of population in each age group is greater than in both the state and nation. This reflects the increase from new residents moving to the area and the aging of the last of the baby boom population. Over the age of 60 the county has a much larger share of population than the state and nation.

The consequences of the increases in the population groups over 40 on the current and future labor force cannot be overstated. While the labor force has already shown signs of diminished growth, the full impact of an increasing older population, preparing to retire, will exacerbate the labor shortage.



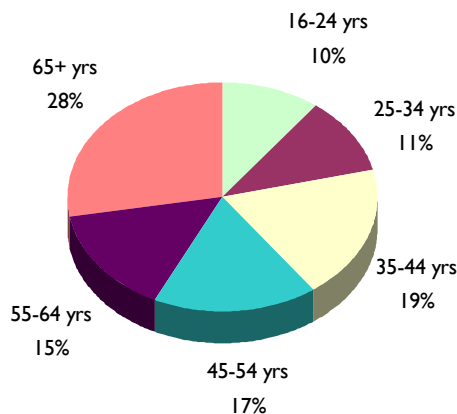
Source: US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

Compounding the problem of fewer workers is an aging population requiring more services that historically have been supplied by a young workforce.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) includes only the population 16 years and older as a potential source of labor. The BLS also excludes the population residing in institutions, such as nursing homes and prisons, and military personnel as a source of labor.

## County Civilian Labor Force

**Iron County Labor Force Age Groups**



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

The Iron County population in 2000 16 years and older totaled 5,715. This population comprises the potential labor force in the county even though 28 percent is 65 years and older. The population over 65 years old shares some common characteristics. To begin with, most of them are retired, even though a recent trend has retirees returning to the workforce to pursue new interests.

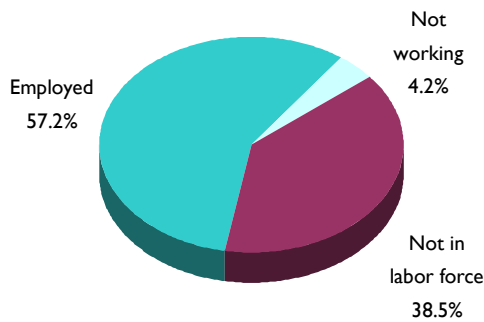
Other age groups also share characteristics. The 16-24 year olds are generally in school, work part-time and during summer breaks, and are starting their first jobs. This group is largely responsible for the increase in labor force during the summer months.

The next group, 25-34 year olds, are the workforce of the future, developing and honing skills, and

(Continued on page 3)

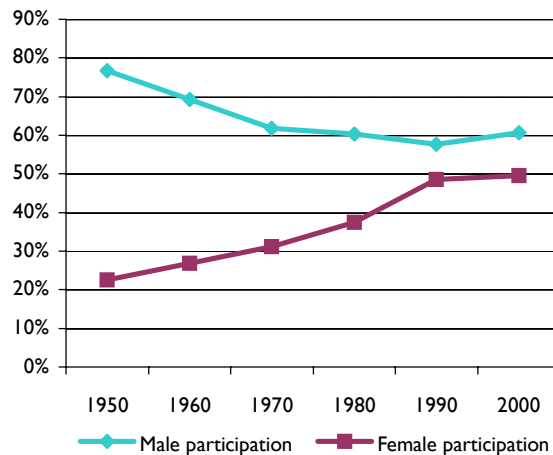


### 2001 Labor Force Participation



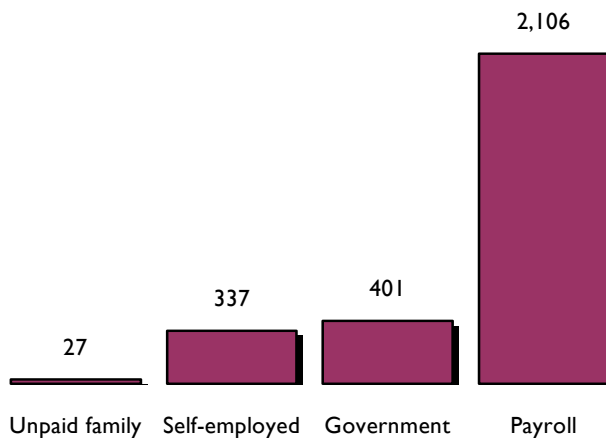
Source: Estimated from WI Dept. of Administration population estimates, Jan. 2001, US Census Bureau, and WI Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

### Labor Force Participation of Male and Female Residents



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

### Type of Employment



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, *Census 2000*

moving into new careers. Many are starting and raising families, acquiring property, and working in at least one job if not two. Many of these same characteristics are shared by the next group, 35-44 year olds. This group is also preparing to send children to college, adding or upgrading housing, and looking for ways to add to the family income. Labor force participation is often highest in this group.

By middle-age, workers begin to think about retirement, and during the 1990s, workers were retiring in their fifties. By 65 years old most of the population has retired.

Because each age group has different interests the number of individuals who are employed or at least look for work varies. Labor force participation rates by age groups from Census 2000 is scheduled for release in the fall of 2002.

An estimate of labor force participation in 2001 in Iron County included 57.2 percent of the labor force age population that worked, 4.2 percent of the population that were unemployed and 38.5 percent who choose not to work. The labor force participation rate in 2001 (the percent of the population 16 years and over that either worked or looked for work) was 61.5 percent.

Labor force participation, based on estimates from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program, peaked in the county in the mid-1990s and has been falling steadily since then. Participation is currently much lower than in both the state (73.5%) and nation (66.9%). The lower participation rate is probably from the high share of population over 65 years old who do not participate in the labor force and from lower participation from females.

Labor force participation varies not only by the age of the population but also by sex. Over the last fifty years, participation in the labor force of females has steadily increased while participation of men has declined. There are a number of factors that serve as explanations for these divergent trends, but the most comprehensive is the change in the county's industry mix away from goods-producing jobs towards service-producing jobs. Another factor is access to retirement income, especially for men who have been in the workforce longer and in more permanent positions, than women are.

Labor force participants who work are engaged in several 'types of employment'. In Iron County 73

(Continued on page 4)



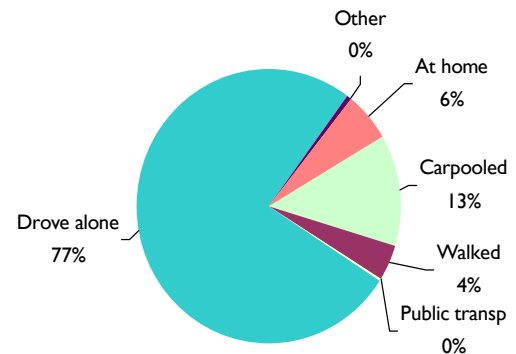
percent of the employed population work for a private employer and receive a payroll check. Government workers also receive a payroll check and comprise 14 percent of total employment.

Roughly 13 percent of workers in Iron County are either self-employed or work as an unpaid family member. The share of self-employed and unpaid family members is much greater in Iron County than in the state (6.4%), and is roughly the same as in 1990. Self-employed and proprietors tend to stay in the labor force longer than workers in payroll jobs do.

The number of self-employed and unpaid family members is a good reminder that total employment in the labor force includes more workers than just those employed in payroll jobs. It is one of the reasons that total employment in most counties is greater than the number of nonfarm wage and salary employment (see page 5).

An additional factor that effects the local labor force is the number of workers who commute into, or out of the county for jobs. Census 2000 revealed that roughly 21 percent of the workers living in Iron County traveled to jobs in other Wisconsin counties while another 25 percent traveled to jobs in

### County Travel-to-Work Patterns



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, Census 2000

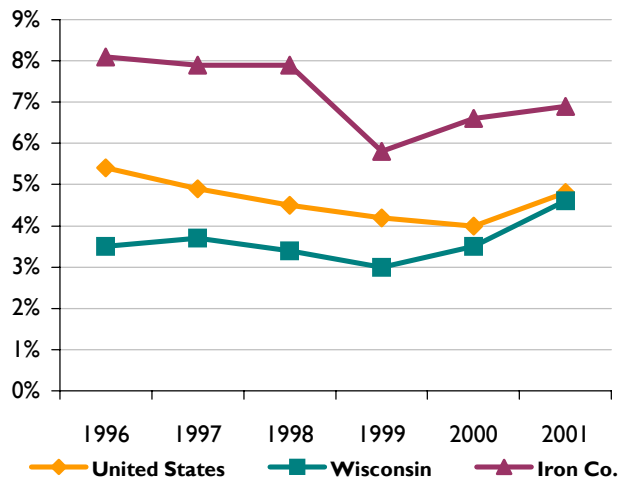
another state. The specific destination of those workers from the census is not scheduled for release until 2003 but it is very likely they work in either Ashland County in Wisconsin or Gogebic County in Michigan.

Over the last five years the number of employed in Iron County increased by 200 from 3,000 in 1996. In spite of some job reductions from manufacturing and services employers, employment has remained relatively stable in Iron County.

That said, the unemployment rate is, and has always been, much higher than the rate in either the nation or the state. Large fluctuations in seasonal jobs in construction and tourism which elevate the unemployment rate during the winter months, contribute to a higher annual average rate. In 2001, a high unemployment rate of 11.0 percent occurred in April and a low rate of 4.0 percent occurred in September.

Most of the workers in Iron County drive alone to a job, while 13 percent, higher than in the state, were part of a car pool. Roughly 6.0 percent of those employed work at home, compared with 4.0 percent in the state. And, with little public transportation, it is no surprise that so few take advantage of it. Statewide, only two percent use public transportation.

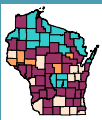
### Unemployment Rate Comparison



### Iron County Civilian Labor Force Data

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Labor Force	3,300	3,300	3,200	3,200	3,300	3,400
Employed	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,100	3,200
Unemployed	260	260	250	190	220	240
Unemployment Rate	8.1%	7.9%	7.9%	5.8%	6.6%	6.9%

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, revised March 2002



## County Industry Employment

### Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Percent change	
							1 year	5 year
<b>Total</b>	2,148	2,200	2,197	2,322	2,363	2,463	4.2%	14.7%
<b>Goods Producing</b>	533	594	637	703	743	772	3.9%	44.9%
Construction & Mining	164	200	240	261	291	300	3.2%	83.5%
Manufacturing	369	393	396	442	452	472	4.4%	27.9%
Durable	176	208	230	283	313	358	14.5%	103.6%
Nondurable	193	185	166	159	139	114	-18.3%	-41.1%
<b>Service Producing</b>	1,615	1,607	1,560	1,619	1,620	1,690	4.3%	4.7%
Transportation, Communications & Utilities	63	55	53	58	58	57	-2.3%	-10.5%
Total Trade	610	604	618	625	633	629	-0.6%	3.2%
Wholesale	39	49	58	58	63	63	-0.3%	61.6%
Retail	571	555	561	566	570	567	-0.7%	-0.8%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	57	56	53	40	40	42	5.3%	-27.0%
Services & Misc.	531	533	468	511	482	524	8.8%	-1.2%
Total Government	354	359	368	384	407	439	7.6%	23.9%

Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, Nonfarm wage and salary estimates, revised March 2002

Nonfarm wage and salary employment is an estimate of the number of jobs generated by employers who are located in Iron County. All jobs are counted from managers to laborers, who work full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, or by piece-work. Employment is classified using the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of the primary product

of the employer.

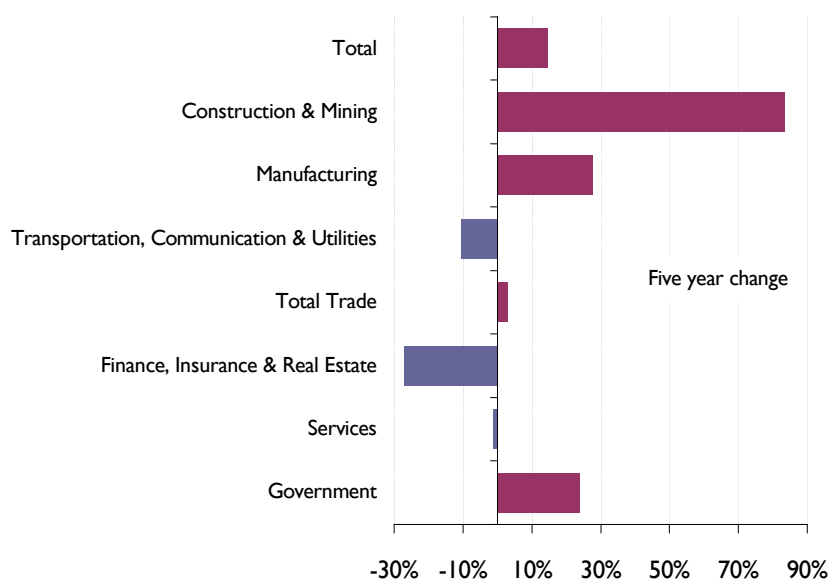
It becomes apparent when you look at this table that Iron County workers find jobs with more than just county employers. There were 2,463 nonfarm wage and salary jobs in the county in 2001, a year when the total employment in the labor force (county residents) was 3,200. In addition to jobs in Iron County, workers drove to jobs in adjacent counties and found work through self-employment.

Total nonfarm employment increased 14.7 percent from 1996 to 2001 compared with an 8.7 percent increase in the state. Iron County employers added 315 jobs in the five-year period, most of them with construction and durable goods manufacturing employers. Manufacturing employment increased by 103 jobs even though nondurable goods employment declined by 80. The change in manufacturing employment out-paced the decline in production jobs in the state in both the one- and five-year periods.

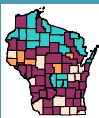
Construction employers were kept busy in the last five years also. One of the county's largest employers, Wayne Nasi Construction Inc, travels throughout the

(Continued on page 6)

### Employment Change by Industry Division: 1996 to 2001



Source: WI DWD, Nonfarm wage and salary estimates, revised March 2002



### Top 10 Employers

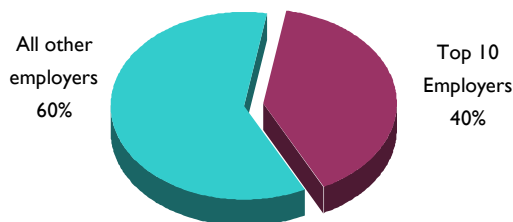
Company	Product or Service	Size
Hurley School District	Education	100-249
Action Floor Systems LLC	Lumber & wood: flooring	100-249
Villa Marie Health Care Center	Health care services: nursing care	100-249
Wayne Nasi Construction Inc.	General contractor	50-99
The Copps Corp.	Food store: grocery	50-99
County of Iron	Executive & general government	50-99
Giovanoni True Value Hardware Inc.	Building/hardware/garden supply store	50-99
School District of Mercer	Education	50-99
Liberty Bell Chalet Inc.	Eating & drinking establishment	20-49
Snow Country Hardwoods Inc.	Lumber & wood: flooring & paneling	20-49

### Top 10 Industry Groups

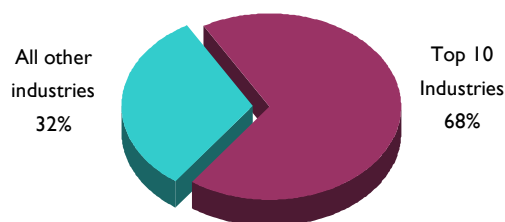
Industry Group	March 2001		Numeric change	
	Employers	Employees	1-year	5-year
Lumber and Wood Products	15	317	47	191
Eating and Drinking Places	35	237	14	-21
Health Services	*	*	*	*
Educational Services	*	*	*	*
Hotels and other Lodging Places	7	163	84	-27
Executive, Legislative, and General	14	149	4	10
General Building Contractors	10	130	21	75
Food Stores	3	110	-10	-19
Apparel and other Textile Products	*	*	*	*
Building Materials & Garden Supplies	*	*	*	*

\*data suppressed to maintain confidentiality

**Top 10 Employers' Share of Nonfarm Employment**



**Top 10 Industry Group Share of Nonfarm Employment**



Source: WI Department of Workforce Development, ES-202 file tape, December 2001

northern region working on construction projects. General building construction also appears on the list of largest industry groups in the county with 10 employers and 130 jobs. Lumber and wood products employment, the largest industry group in the county, increased by 191 jobs from 1996 to 2001. Over two-thirds of all manufacturing jobs are with a lumber and wood products employer.

In the last year, most of the job growth occurred

with employers in the services industry division who added 40 jobs and in government with the increase of 30 jobs. Villa Marie Health Care Center, is one the county's largest employers as are three government employers: Hurley School District, the County, and School District of Mercer. Of the 246 employers in Iron County, ten provide nearly half of the jobs.

(Continued on page 7)





Two employers from the retail trade division also appear on the list of largest employers, one selling groceries and the other prepared foods. Retail trade employers are generally smaller and not included among the ten largest in a county. Because there are so many of them, however, they provide many jobs.

In Iron County, the largest industry division is retail trade yet the total payroll from retail employers is only fifth largest in the county. Many of the jobs in retail trade are part-time and seasonal and often have a high turnover rate. These conditions, plus

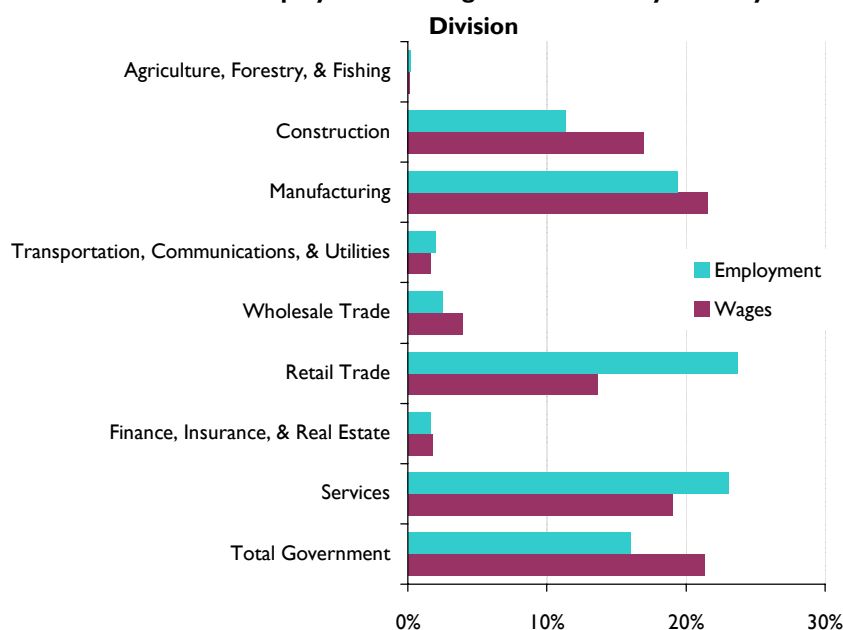
lower hourly wages, lead to an average annual wage of only \$11,923.

Employment with services industry employers is nearly as high as in retail trade but the annual average wage is much higher. The annual average wage in services, however, is only 60 percent of that earned by workers in the state. While some of the disparity is from lower wages and part time hours a larger factor for lower annual wages is the difference in occupations employed in Iron County and the rest of the state.

The largest payroll in the county of \$10,610,507 is from manufacturing employers. Nearly 22 percent of the total payroll from all employers of \$49,198,434 is from manufacturers. The annual average wage of \$23,066, earned by roughly 19 percent of county workers, is only 58 percent of what production workers earn statewide.

The annual average wage for all workers of \$20,781 was only 67 percent of the average statewide but increased 7.1 percent in the last year. This greatly exceeds the increase of 0.8 percent in the state in 2001. There are many caveats that affect the annual average wage in an area including part-time and seasonal work, turnover, overtime, and employer reductions. Employers generally lay off the last hired workers who earn less money than those retained.

2001 Employment & Wage Distribution by Industry



Annual Average Wage By Industry Division

	Iron Co. Annual Average Wage	Wisconsin Annual Average Wage	Percent of State Average	1-year percent change	5-year percent change
All Industries*	\$ 20,781	\$ 30,922	67.2%	7.1%	36.6%
Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing	\$ 15,742	\$ 22,565	69.8%	129.9%	54.1%
Construction	\$ 31,075	\$ 39,011	79.7%	17.4%	31.7%
Manufacturing	\$ 23,066	\$ 39,739	58.0%	5.4%	33.3%
Transportation, Communications, & Utilities	\$ 16,999	\$ 36,639	46.4%	14.1%	32.4%
Wholesale Trade	\$ 31,812	\$ 40,521	78.5%	4.4%	14.0%
Retail Trade	\$ 11,923	\$ 14,596	81.7%	4.6%	15.5%
Finance, Insurance, & Real estate	\$ 22,768	\$ 40,933	55.6%	22.1%	56.5%
Services	\$ 17,140	\$ 28,775	59.6%	4.2%	54.1%
Total Government	\$ 27,655	\$ 33,785	81.9%	0.8%	14.0%

\* Mining excluded from table since wages were suppressed to maintain confidentiality in every county

Source: WI DWD, *Employment, Wages, and Taxes Due covered by Wisconsin's U.C. Law, 2002*





## Occupation and Education Characteristics of County Population

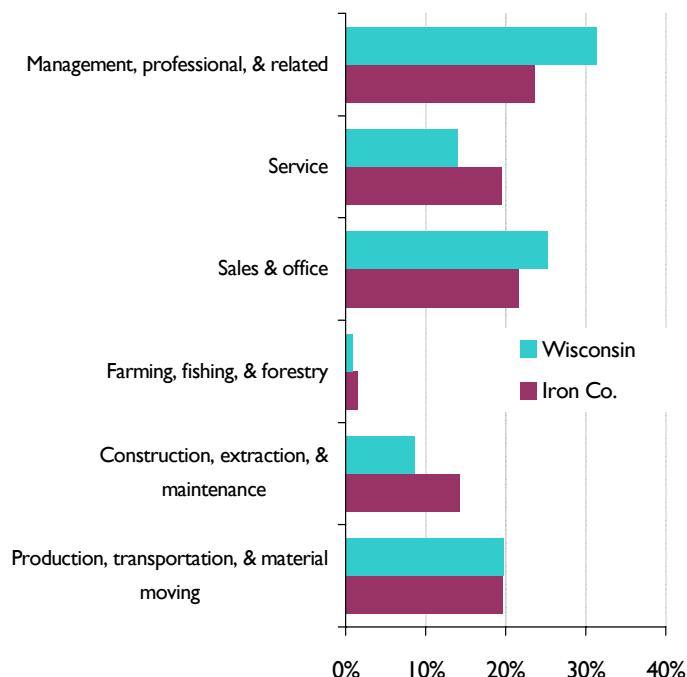
The previous pages explored jobs classified by industry, but jobs are also classified by occupation. Data on occupation employment is more difficult to access, especially at the county level, but the census offers a glimpse into the types of occupations in Iron County. The distribution of occupations reflects the employment of all resident workers, including those that work outside of the county and are self-employed.

The largest group in the county and the state is management, professional and related occupations. The mix of occupations in this group varies by geographic location depending on the industry mix. In Iron County, most of the jobs in this group are teachers and health care professionals. These jobs are primarily found with employers in the services industry division and local school districts and require education and training beyond high school. Nationally, 80 percent of jobs in this group require post-secondary education, while in Wisconsin, roughly 78 percent do.

In Iron County 45 percent of the population 25 years old and over have some education beyond high school, but only 13 percent hold a college degree. Statewide, 22.5 percent of the same population group holds a college degree (Census 2000).

A larger share of the population has 1-3 years of post-secondary education that could include some college with no degree, an associate degree, or technical college training. Workers in this group

**Employment by Occupation Group: 2000**

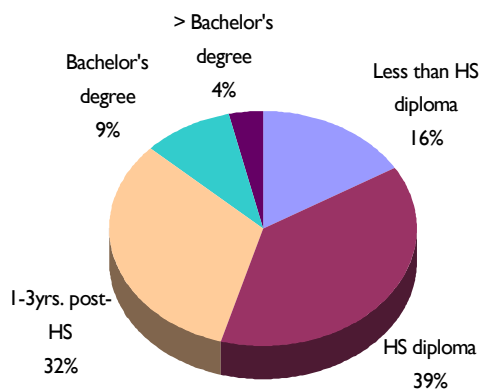


US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Census 2000

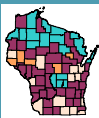
find employment in all occupational groups including the production and maintenance occupations, the third largest in the county. Typically these occupations are employed by manufacturing employers, but the group also includes maintenance workers, truck drivers and mechanics who are found in all industry divisions, especially wholesale trade. Employers now expect workers in these occupations to have some training beyond high school. The same is true of many of the sales and office occupational group, the second largest group in the county. Occupations in this group include accounting, advertising, technical sales, and general office occupations.

The fourth largest group is service occupations. This group is larger in the county than in the state and has the fewest occupations that require training beyond high school. Workers in service occupations comprise 19 percent of the workforce in Iron County compared with 14 percent in the state. Service occupations include nurse aides, janitors, kitchen workers, waiters, and police and firefighters. Wages for many of these jobs are low and workers often work less than 40 hours per week.

**Education Attainment in 2000**



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, Census 2000



## County Income Information

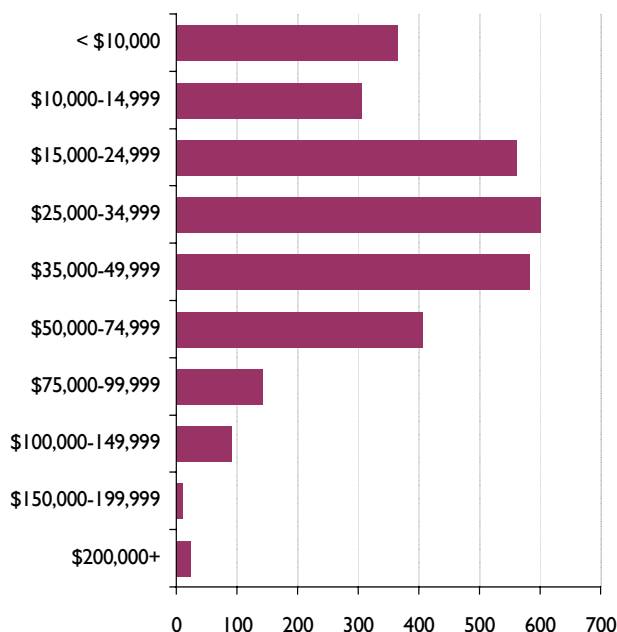
The median household income in 1999 (last full year of income data used for census) in Iron County of \$29,580 was 68 percent of the state median income of \$43,791. Less than five percent of the households in the county had an annual income over \$100,000 while 22 percent earned less than \$25,000. So many households with low income contribute to a poverty rate in the county of 11.1 percent that is higher than the rate in the state of 8.7 percent.

Household income includes income not only from wages of all persons living in the household, but also from self-employment, proprietorships, investments, assets, social security, retirement, Veteran's benefits, welfare, and unemployment benefits. Because there is generally more than one person in a household (the average in Iron County is 2.2 persons per household) and workers often hold more than one job helps explain why household income is higher than both per capita personal income and average income from wages.

Per capita personal income (PCPI) is the total income in an area, \$141,386,000 in Iron County, divided by the total population. PCPI in Iron County in 2000 of \$20,640 was 73 percent of the PCPI in Wisconsin and 70 percent of the United States. In the last year it increased 5.8 percent, greater than the state increase and matching the national increase.

Incomes are lower in Iron County, not only because of lower wages but also because of a larger

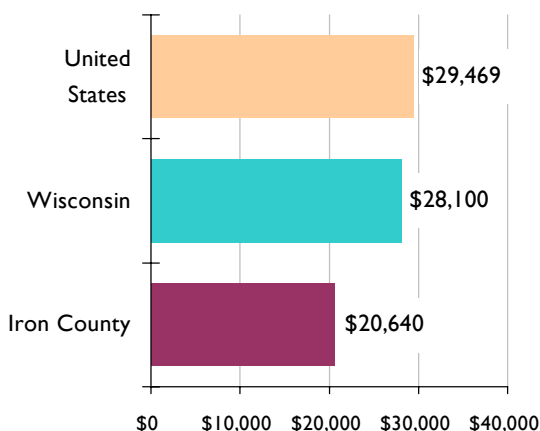
**Households by Income Range**  
Median household income in Iron Co. \$29,580



Source: US Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, Census 2000

elderly population living on fixed incomes. Income from government retirement and medical payments comprises 85 percent of transfer payments and transfer payments in the county are a much greater share than in either the state or nation. The population living on fixed income will only increase in the next ten years.

**Per Capita Personal Income 2000**



Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Components of Total Personal Income: 2000**

